
Appendix F: Summary of the Multi-Stakeholder Educational Process Report

The following is the summary of the major challenges facing the education and training sector in Toronto. It was obtained from the report, *Creating a Better Way: A Report on the Multi-Stakeholder Educational Process for the Metro Toronto Education and Training Steering Committee* by Gail Benick and Anver Saloojee (December 1996).

A Summary of the Macro Challenges Facing the Education and Training (E/T) Sector in Metro Toronto

There is a high degree of consensus regarding the macro challenges facing the various segments of the Education and Training (E/T) Sector in Metro Toronto. These challenges can be grouped as follows:

- ◆ Government Related Challenges
- ◆ Technological Challenges
- ◆ Lack of Uniform Standards
- ◆ Boundary Concerns
- ◆ Contradictory Demands on the Segments

Government Related Challenges

Instability of federal/provincial relations and its impact on the provision of training

The federal government is interested in devolving the responsibility for training to the provincial level. At present the federal and provincial governments are in the process of negotiating the complete transfer of education, training and adjustment programs to the provinces. However, the negotiations have generated a high degree of instability and uncertainty. The resultant paralysis of government in the area of education, training and adjustment has hurt the clients and the lack of block purchase of training has hurt service providers. The impact of government paralysis and lack of spending on education, training and adjustment programs has meant that:

1. the learner has lost training opportunities
2. the deliverers of training programs have lost training dollars
3. the unemployment rate remains high because clients cannot get the training that they need to gain employment
4. employers do not have access to the pool of talent that they require

Funding Crisis: The Federal and Provincial Governments are Making Social Policy Based on Fiscal Policy and Priorities

CHANGING CRITERIA AND RULES FOR FUNDING OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMS

Service providers are not always aware of changes to rules that can have significant impacts on their programs. This makes planning difficult. Segments cannot plan even one year in advance because both levels of government constantly change the rules. The rules set by the funders appear to be inconsistent and to change depending on who the delivery agency is. Thus unfair advantages are created.

GOVERNMENT PERCEPTION THAT METRO IS OVER FUNDED

It is felt that both levels of government believe that Metro is saturated with training dollars. The provincial government's move to a "more equitable funding arrangement" would mean that Metro is under funded. The reality is that in Metro there are long lists of people waiting to receive training. Metro is not over funded given the population density and diversity of this area. The fiscal cuts have resulted in the inability of service providers to meet the growing demand for training. The federal and provincial governments do not demonstrate recognition of the complexities of Metro and its diverse population. While lip service is paid to how important diversity is to the international Competitiveness of Metro, the governments are not willing to spend the necessary training dollars to nurture and sustain that diversity.

Credibility Gap Regarding the Effectiveness of Training

There is a misunderstanding about the relationship of education and training to employment. Training in and of itself does not create jobs, but rather assists in overcoming barriers to employment. Without a job creation strategy, education and training will remain scapegoats for what ails the economy as a whole.

Partnership Problems

The funding programs require partnerships, but the conditions are not conducive to partnerships and collaboration. Forced partnerships by government are a problem. Funders foster unhealthy competition between and among the 5 segments [colleges; universities; private trainers; school boards; and community-based trainers] although they talk the language of partnerships.

There is a need to consider the conditions under which partnerships between and among the 5 segments are beneficial and how partnerships could work more effectively in practice.

The Education/Training Sector recognizes the need to foster partnerships, but is wary of forced partnerships by government. Although the government talks the language of partnerships they:

1. isolate the deliverers.
2. make deliverers dependent on funders
3. supply last minute contracts
4. make it difficult to retain a cadre of deliverers who are excellent
5. give short time lines for delivery and short term outcomes

By its actions, the federal government appears to be reluctant to foster partnerships by not giving service deliverers access to each other. The federal government appears to want to retain ultimate control and keep service providers dependent on them by only issuing short-term contracts. The rhetoric of partnerships belies the experience of competitiveness. There is little real impetus for segments of the E/T Sector to collaborate. Funding programs require partnerships, but conditions are not conducive to the development of appropriate partnerships and collaboration. Instead, by rewarding competitiveness, the government discourages partnerships and collaboration.

Funding programs call for alliances, but the criteria are so specific that there is insufficient room to manoeuvre and not enough time to develop real partnerships. The expertise that the 5 segments have in developing training partnerships is not sufficiently recognized.

Unrealistic Time Frames

Funders are expecting training providers to obtain outcomes in unrealistic time frames.

Difficulty of Long Term Planning

Long term planning is impossible because of the uncertainty around funding and lack of information about future programs. There is a lack of real information from government about what they will fund in the future. The idea of “one stop shopping” for information about education, training and adjustment programs is a myth. Service providers do not have full knowledge of all the available programs, nor can they always access information about the availability of training programs for clients.

There is Lack of Clarity around the Role of the Local Board and the Role the Local Board will Play in Metro

It is not clear which government body or agency will co-ordinate the federal and provincial funding of education, training and adjustment programs.

Technological Challenges

Technological Change is Beginning to have an Impact on the Delivery of Training Programs

Training now occurs in an environment where the service providers are forced to compete globally. Geographical boundaries are becoming increasingly irrelevant as a result of access to training via the Internet. In a technologically driven delivery system, time based learning has less justification and will be replaced by outcomes based learning.

Lack of Uniform Standards

There are no national and provincial Standards by which to measure the quality and effectiveness of education, training and adjustment programs.

Boundary Concerns

There is a marked absence of trust among the 5 segments of the E/T Sectors

Long-standing divisions within the sector and competition between the segments have not abated.

“Turf battles” characterize some of the relations between and among the segments of the sector

This is problematic in times of scarce resources. There is a need for more clearly defined roles for the various players in the sector. There will be some overlapping of roles which suggests the need for partnerships; however, each segment ought to stay within the defined roles.

The sector as a whole needs to recognize that the deficiencies in one segment impact on the other segments

For example, some high school graduates are not graduating with a sufficiently high level of English and mathematics and that means that the post secondary sector (public and private) have more remedial work to do with students.

The absence of regular communication within the sector continues to be a problem

Best practices are not sufficiently shared, nor is information on funding adequately circulated.

There is a need to maintain a healthy public sector which is essential for the future of education and training initiatives in the province

There is a lack of accreditation flow through (between the private Institutions and the universities and colleges) for comparable courses taught

Accreditation issues need to be worked out in order for students to move between the segment deliverers with relative ease and without academic penalty, particularly if the client/learner is at the centre of education and training initiatives.

Contradictory Demands on the Segments

The challenges facing the E/T Sector can be usefully understood as structural constraints that are manifested as contradictory demands on the segments. Each segment internalizes and responds to these contradictory pulls in a very different fashion, but for all of the segments, these incompatible expectations seemed unavoidable and stressful. The contradictions were expressed in the focus groups as follows:

- ◆ The need to be competitive and collaborative
- ◆ The need to service more clients with less resources
- ◆ The need to service clients within a geographic boundary and simultaneously transcend the geographic boundaries to compete in a global market place
- ◆ The need to achieve high quality outcomes in less time
- ◆ The need to support the core business of the organization and at the same time develop alternative ventures

These contradictions continue to pose challenges for the E/T Sector, in part, because a vision or societal goal that would unify the sector has not yet been articulated.